

## **Alabama Ready to Assist Oklahoma as Needed in Tornado Recovery**

MONTGOMERY – Governor Robert Bentley on Tuesday said various state agencies in Alabama are in contact with their counterparts in Oklahoma to offer any assistance needed in the recovery from Monday's deadly tornado. Governor Bentley also encouraged Alabamians to keep the people of Oklahoma in their prayers throughout the recovery.

"It's important for all of us to continue to pray for the people of Oklahoma and their leaders," Governor Bentley said. "We can identify with what the people of Oklahoma are going through. Our people understand what it means to comfort loved ones, to support survivors and to help in the long-term recovery of communities."

Governor Bentley said the Alabama Emergency Management Agency has highly-trained disaster recovery teams ready to serve in Oklahoma as necessary. Also, the Alabama National Guard stands ready to help in Oklahoma if any guard assistance is requested during the recovery process.

In addition, the Alabama Department of Insurance has contacted the Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner's Office to offer any needed assistance. Following the April 2011 tornadoes, various insurance departments from across the country sent representatives to Alabama to help advise citizens on how to file claims. Representatives also worked to answer questions from storm survivors on various insurance matters. The Alabama Department of Insurance is ready to do the same for the people of Oklahoma, as needed, and will coordinate any requests through the Alabama EMA.

"My office is in contact with Governor Fallin's office in Oklahoma," Governor Bentley said. "We know the people of Oklahoma are facing an overwhelming challenge right now, and it may be some time before the leaders in Oklahoma are able to assess whether they need any direct assistance from our state agencies. What we can say with certainty, though, is that we're ready to help in any way we can. The people of Alabama will stand strong with the people of Oklahoma."

Serve Alabama, the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Volunteer Service, has received several inquiries from citizens wanting to know how to help. The most effective donations after disasters are financial donations. Serve Alabama has compiled donation information on various non-profit organizations that help with disaster response. Information can be found online at [www.servealabama.gov](http://www.servealabama.gov). Also, information from the American Red Cross can be found at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

It is important for civilians not to "self-deploy" to Oklahoma at this particular time.

“The immediate search and rescue operation that is underway is critical to saving lives; however, when people with good intentions self-deploy, they risk jeopardizing the mission and can create unnecessary confusion within the disaster,” Alabama EMA Director Art Faulkner said. “Part of our responsibility at the Alabama EMA is to manage the flow of resources internally as well as externally.”

Instead of “self-deploying,” officials recommend that any on-site volunteer efforts should be coordinated with established relief agencies. Volunteers Active in Disaster (VOAD) is a group of trusted agencies that work together to find opportunities for people to help. More information from VOAD can be found online through the VOAD links on the Serve Alabama website. VOAD will continue to provide updates throughout the recovery.

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